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DEPARTMENT FOR R, EUR, EUR/PPD, EUR/WE
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SUBJECT: FRENCH TV TF-1 REQUEST TO INTERVIEW POTUS

1. SUMMARY. France's leading private television station has contacted the Ambassador to request an interview with President Bush in advance of the G-8 meetings. We strongly endorse this request and ask (para 6) Department concurrence and support in securing White House approval. END SUMMARY.

2. France's TF-1 television's primetime hour-long evening newscast boasts 39% of the audience share for that time slot, thanks in part to its refusal - unusual in this media environment - to take an identifiable editorial line. TF-1 draws viewers from across the French middle classes because of its popular series programmed for immediately after the nightly newscast.

3. TF-1's nightly news anchorman Patrick Poivre d'Arvor is a well-respected media figure, one of the most identifiable in France, and akin to Walter Cronkite in his heyday. He has interviewed guests ranging from movie stars to heads of state, including Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2003. Despite repeated requests

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to the White House through its Washington bureau, TF-1 has not interviewed an American President since President Clinton in 1999.

4. At a lunch for Ambassador Stapleton and in subsequent contacts, Poivre d'Arvor raised the idea of an interview with President Bush. He has proposed to do this in the run-up to the G-8 meetings in St. Petersburg. Questions would focus on the U.S. agenda for the G-8, U.S.-European relations, Iraq, Iran, and the U.S.-French bilateral relationship. Details such as precise topics and exact date remain to be negotiated with TF-1.

5. U.S. and French positions are close on a number of key issues including Iran, Syria/Lebanon, Hamas, non- and counter-proliferation and other aspects of our global agenda. Partly as a result of France's own experience, French officials are restrained on difficult issues such as Guantanamo and the allegations of secret detainee flights in Europe. A Presidential interview with TF-1 would constitute a major media event, reach the prime TV viewership here and affirm the positive momentum in our bilateral relations and the importance of U.S.-European cooperation in support of the freedom agenda.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: Embassy strongly endorses TF-1's interview request and requests Bureau and Department concurrence as well as support in securing White House approval for this interview.

STAPLETON